PROMOTING SECURE BORDERS AND OPEN DOORS
A National Interest-Based Visa Policy for Students and Scholars

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

1. **PROVIDE EFFECTIVE POLICY GUIDANCE.**
   - Congress and the Department of Homeland Security must act to make "Secure Borders – Open Doors" the effective policy guidance for the Department of State.

2. **FOCUS EFFORTS ON THOSE WHO REQUIRE SPECIAL SCREENING.**
   - **Give consulates discretion to grant waivers of personal appearance based on risk analysis**, **subject to State Department policy guidance and approval,** as recommended by the State Department Inspector General in December 2002.
   - **Refine controls on advanced science and technology.** In consultation with the scientific community, define the advanced science and technology to which access must be controlled, and empower consular officers to exercise discretion on non-sensitive applications where neither the applicant nor the applicant's country present concerns.
   - **Avoid repetitive processing of those who temporarily leave the United States.** Institute a presumption that a security clearance is valid for duration of status or program, assuming no status violations. Any necessary reviews within this period should be fast-tracked.
   - **Avoid repetitive processing of frequent visitors.** Establish a presumption of approval for those who have previously been granted U.S. visas and who have no status violations.
   - **Expedite processing and save consular resources by incorporating pre-screening or pre-certification of students and scholars.** This could be accomplished in many ways. Options include: (1) sending countries agreeing to pre-screen applicants in order to facilitate their citizens' entry into the U.S.; (2) sending universities providing identity verification under agreements executed with consulates; and (3) the State Department utilizing its own overseas advising centers to ensure that all necessary documents are in order prior to applications being sent on to the consulates.

3. **CREATE A TIMELY, TRANSPARENT AND PREDICTABLE VISA PROCESS**
   - **The White House should institute standard guidelines for inter-agency reviews of visa applications:**
     - Establish a 15-day standard for responses to the State Department from other agencies in the inter-agency clearance process.
     - Implement a 30-day standard for the completion of the entire inter-agency review process, including the response to the consulate's security clearance request.
     - Flag for expedited processing any application not completed within 30 days, and advise the consulate of the delay and the estimated processing time remaining.
     - In the case of applications not completed within 30 days, the applicant, or the program to which the applicant seeks access, should be able to inquire about the application's status, and the estimated processing time remaining, via a call-in number or email inbox.
     - Establish a special review process to resolve any cases not decided within 60 days.
   - **Make ground rules predictable by imposing them prospectively**, not on those already in the application pipeline.

4. **PROVIDE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES, AND MANAGE WITHIN THEM.**
   - Congress must act to bring the resources appropriated for the consular affairs function into line with the increased scrutiny of visa applications that Congress demands, and the State Department must manage within the available resources.
   - Adequate resources must be provided to ensure the interoperability of data systems necessary for the efficient functioning of the inter-agency review process.